

## THE ST. JOHN AMBULANCE ASSOCIATION.

### THE STOCKPORT CENTRE.

THE difficulty which has arisen at Stockport with regard to the administration of the St. John Ambulance Centre there has now reached a stage at which it may profitably be considered here. As was indicated in a brief reference to the subject in a previous issue of the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL*, it appeared desirable before commenting upon the matter to await the reply of Earl Egerton of Tatton, the President of the Local Centre, to the representations made to him. This has now been given, and a copy has been furnished to us.

The Centre was founded in 1883. Since then classes, conducted by medical men resident in the town, have been given annually, and examinations have been held in the ordinary course. In addition to general classes, special courses have been given to the police, and these have, in recent times at least, been given by the Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Porter, who is also Police Surgeon.

In 1897 Dr. Porter was instructed by the Watch Committee of the Town Council to inquire why the charge made for the examination of this class should have been so high as £5 5s. This inquiry made verbally by Dr. Porter was met in a discourteous manner by the Honorary Secretary of the Local Centre, Mr. Ferns, solicitor, and upon the matter being reported to the Watch Committee that body passed the following resolution :

That this committee hereby records its dissatisfaction with the manner in which the whole matter has been treated by Mr. Ferns, the Local Honorary Secretary.

A communication addressed to the Chief Secretary of the St. John Ambulance Association drew the reply that the total amount charged by the Central Association against the Stockport Centre was £1 3s. 6d., and it was suggested that the extra charge included stores supplied, hire of charts and diagrams, and perhaps a stretcher. To this Dr. Porter, still acting under the instructions of his committee, replied that the charge did not include stores, all of which were paid for separately; nor had it any reference to the hire of charts or a stretcher. In reply to this communication the Chief Secretary wrote, "I know nothing about it. I must refer you to the Chairman of the Centre if you wish for any explanation." An official communication was then addressed to the Honorary Secretary of the Local Centre asking him for an explanation of the extra charge, and transmitting to him copies of the correspondence. In reply, Mr. Ferns wrote a letter, in the course of which he said :

I beg to state that the fee of 5 guineas for last year's police class was made on the authority of this Centre, and is perfectly in order. I would further remark that this Centre has full power to regulate its own fees for classes held under it and the charges referred to in the letter of the Chief Secretary for examiner, etc., are matters solely between us and the head office, and have nothing to do with outsiders.

A further communication was then addressed by Dr. Porter to the Chief Secretary transmitting the reply of the Honorary Secretary of the Local Centre, and making certain inquiries as to the constitutional powers of local centres. In reply to this the chief Secretary wrote under date of March 23rd, 1897, as follows :

In reply to your inquiries : (1) The committee of a local centre of which the honorary secretary is but the mouthpiece of the committee, is perfectly justified in charging any sum it likes for the examination of an ambulance class, and we leave this matter entirely in the hands of the chairman and committee. As regards your second question, a Centre is responsible to the Association to the extent that it must carry out the regulations laid down in Pamphlet 57 (b). In extreme cases appeal can be made to the Central Executive Committee in London. If the Centre charged a class £100, it might of course be considered an exorbitant charge and an appeal be justifiable, but I do not consider that the charge of £5 5s. to a wealthy corporation such as Stockport, is at all excessive. A Centre has constantly to pay for poor classes which are not self-supporting, and naturally expects, in accordance with our usual custom, that those classes able to pay should contribute to those who cannot. Pamphlet 57 (b) answers your third question. The impression you mention that the account rendered to you has the direct sanction of this office is not warranted, for, as I mentioned above, we do not interfere in these matters.

At this point the matter was allowed to drop, but in June, 1898, the Chief Constable at Stockport requested the Honorary Secretary of the Local Centre to arrange for the examination of another police class, but Mr. Ferns replied making certain objections—among others, that before he could make the arrangements as requested he must "have some guarantee that the fees this time would be paid without demur." The Watch Committee thereupon resolved that all future com-

munications with regard to ambulance work and the police force should be made direct to the head office in London, and this particular examination was conducted by the Central Association for the fee of £1 14s., but the Central Association objected to the continuance of this arrangement.

The Stockport Local Centre of the St. John Ambulance Association, as has already been stated, was founded in 1883 at a public meeting. A Committee of some twenty members was then elected, with Mr. Ferns as Honorary Secretary. We are informed that meetings of the Committee were held in October of that year, in September, 1884, and in January, 1885; one other meeting was called at which no one attended, and the next meeting of the Centre appears not to have been held until February, 1899. On January 25th, 1899, the Stockport and District Medical Society passed resolutions expressing the opinion that the charges made by the Local Centre for providing examiners for first aid and other classes should not exceed those of the head office in London for exactly the same work, and that the Medical Society should be represented upon the committee of the Local Centre by at least three of its members nominated by the Society. These resolutions were communicated to the Honorary Secretary, who, we are informed, called upon the Secretary of the Stockport Medical Society, and expressed himself in extremely unbecoming terms with regard to the Society. At a public meeting on February 7th, called for the primary purpose of distributing certificates and medallions to successful students of the Centre, an attack was made upon Dr. Smeeth, the Honorary Secretary of the Medical Society, and at a subsequent meeting of the Medical Society the following resolution was adopted :

That this Society expresses its continued confidence in its Secretary, and deprecates the unwarranted attack made on Dr. Smeeth in the *Advertiser* of February 10th.

Subsequently Dr. Christian, who had been elected a member of the Local Centre, wrote to Mr. Ferns, suggesting that he should apologise for the offence he had given as Local Honorary Secretary; but Mr. Ferns replied that, "as he had nothing to express regret for, either to the Ambulance Committee or to anyone else, he had no intention of doing anything of the kind."

At a meeting of the Stockport Medical Society held on March 30th it was unanimously resolved :

That in consequence of the offensive references and objectionable conduct of the Local Honorary Secretary of the Stockport Centre of the St. John Ambulance Association to the Medical Society and some of its members individually, prior to and arising out of the public meeting held in the Pendlebury Memorial Hall on February 7th, 1899, the members of the Stockport and District Medical Society will reluctantly be compelled to abstain from lecturing in connection with the Local Centre, as at present constituted, until the local Honorary Secretary withdraws and apologises for such references and conduct. And the Society further suggests that the past management of this Centre be officially inquired into by the Central Executive Committee in London.

On April 8th the Honorary Secretary of the Stockport Medical Society addressed a letter to Lord Egerton of Tatton, President of the Stockport Centre of the St. John Ambulance Association, forwarding a copy of the above resolution, and offering to furnish to Lord Egerton a complete statement showing how the unfortunate state of affairs with the Local Centre had been brought about, and stating that a deputation would be glad to wait upon him if he preferred that course. Lord Egerton of Tatton replied by a letter, dated April 13th, in which he declined either to receive a deputation or a written statement, and praising Mr. Ferns for having kept up the work of the Ambulance Association in the town unsupported for many years. Lord Egerton further stated that Mr. Ferns had his support and confidence, which had not been shaken by the attacks made upon him by some members of the Medical Society.

The occurrence at Stockport goes to confirm a suspicion aroused by certain other incidents in the history of the St. John Ambulance Association, that this Association is in danger of mistaking the relation in which it stands to the medical profession. Stockport is only one of a large number of towns throughout the country in which for many years members of the medical profession have, from the most disinterested motives, co-operated with the St. John Ambulance Association by giving lectures for the

local centres. It must be confessed that a more generous recognition of the debt which the St. John Ambulance Association owes to these gentlemen would be only becoming in a public organisation. However this may be, it seems abundantly clear that the Honorary Secretary of the Stockport Local Centre has mistaken these relations, and, as the President of the Centre has not thought fit to give weight to the representations which have been made to him on behalf of the medical profession, we must now look to the central organisation to undertake the inquiry which he has declined to institute; for it is intolerable that members of the medical profession should be treated with the discourtesy shown to them by the representative of the St. John Ambulance Association at Stockport.

In the meanwhile the medical men at Stockport are undoubtedly justified in declining to give further lectures for the St. John Ambulance Association. We do not wish to precipitate a controversy, but we must in justice observe that while the St. John Ambulance Association could not get on without the medical profession, the medical profession could get on perfectly well without the St. John Ambulance Association. Lord Egerton of Tatton speaks of the Medical Society declining to perform a public service in lecturing to the Local Centre, but, so far as it is the public duty of the medical profession to instruct the public in ambulance work, that duty can be discharged otherwise than through the St. John Ambulance Association.

We understand that the desirability of taking such a course is in contemplation in Stockport, and that if the St. John Ambulance Association continues to show its present impracticable attitude, steps will be taken to organise a local ambulance society, which will be managed locally with the co-operation of the medical profession in the town.

### THE PLAGUE.

#### HONG KONG.

A TELEGRAM from the Governor of Hong Kong states that during the past week 10 cases of plague and 4 deaths from the disease have occurred in the colony.

#### INDIA.

Contrary to general expectation, at the onset of warm weather the number of plague cases is on the increase in many districts. On the other hand, a number of previously infected towns and districts are now free of plague: they are: Shikarpur, Upper Sind frontier, Thar and Parkur, Malir, Kantra, Palanpur, Dharanpur, Sachin, Janjira, Akalkot, Bhore and Saymir.

In Bombay the number of cases of plague has but slightly diminished. In Poona marked recrudescence has occurred. During one day towards the end of March, 27 fresh cases and 11 deaths were recorded, and at the beginning of the month of April 100 cases remained in the various hospitals of Poona.

In Karachi from 40 to 60 fresh cases of plague occur daily, and the municipality are in difficulty as to the continued expense of maintaining the plague hospital and sanitary staff.

The Hyderabad report is not reassuring; plague seems to have increased in the territory rapidly during the past month. We are glad to see that Dr. Lawrie has overcome his scruples concerning Haffkine's fluid, and that he is urging its use on the condition that the fluid is sterilised in the laboratory of the Hyderabad Medical School.

The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal now admits that "Calcutta has itself become the centre of infection by reason of its more constant intercourse with the mofussil." At last the fact seems to be brought home to the Calcutta authorities that plague really exists there. They have fought against the stigma in a manner worthy of a better cause. The measures proposed are not land quarantine, but (1) that no infected person shall be allowed to travel by rail or steamer, and (2) that all persons leaving an infected for a healthy district shall intimate the fact of their arrival to the authorities. This reduces the interference with business and travel to a minimum, and it is to be hoped that the liberty afforded will be welcomed by the natives, and that the régime will prove successful.

Professor Haffkine stated before the Commission of Inquiry that he preferred to be judged by the results of his method of treatment rather than by theoretical considerations of the admixture of the serum with microbes. He stated that he had devised a plan of producing and employing a supernatant fluid in his preparation for inoculation with the object of reducing the proportion of deaths to cases inoculated. With regard to the presence of microbes in the fluid, Haffkine said that the intrusion should be carefully avoided, but that the conditions under which it happened were such as to secure the elimination of all possible source of danger therefrom.

#### MECCA.

On April 12th two cases of plague were reported from Mecca.

FOOD ADULTERATIONS IN NEW YORK.—A Bill has been passed by the New York State Legislature appropriating the sum of 10,000 dollars to be used by the Commissioner of Agriculture in the investigation of food adulterations.

## ASSOCIATION INTELLIGENCE.

### COUNCIL.

#### NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING.

A SPECIAL Meeting of the Council will be held in the Council Room of the Association, at No. 429, Strand (corner of Agar Street), London, on Friday, the 12th day of May next, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, to consider the recommendation of the special meeting of the Parliamentary Bills Committee held on March 24th last respecting the Medical Acts Amendment Bill.

FRANCIS FOWKE, *General Secretary.*

429, Strand, April 18th, 1899.

### PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL.

At a meeting of the Council held in the Council Room at the office of the Association, 429, Strand, W.C., on Wednesday, April 12th, 1899.

#### Present:

Dr. ROBERT SAUNDBY, LL.D., President of Council, in the chair.

Dr. CHARLES PARSONS, Treasurer.

Dr. JOHN WARD COUSINS, President-Elect.

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| Dr. JAMES BARR, Liverpool.                            | Mr. N. C. MACNAMARA, London.              |
| Dr. RAYNER W. BATTEN, Gloucester.                     | Dr. J. W. MILLER, Dundee.                 |
| Dr. MICHAEL BEVERLEY, Norwich.                        | Dr. JOHN WILLIAM MOORE, Dublin.           |
| Mr. JAMES CANTLIE, London.                            | Dr. C. G. DRUMMOND MORIER, London.        |
| Dr. ALFRED H. CARTER, Birmingham.                     | Mr. W. JONES MORRIS, Portmadoc.           |
| Mr. ANDREW CLARK, London.                             | Mr. R. H. B. NICHOLSON, Hull.             |
| Dr. H. RADCLIFFE CROCKER, London.                     | Surg.-Gen. T. F. O'DWYER, Aldershot.      |
| Dr. MAURY DEAS, Exeter.                               | Mr. C. H. W. PARKINSON, Wimborne Minster. |
| Dr. E. H. DICKINSON, Liverpool.                       | Dr. FRANK M. POPE, Leicester.             |
| Dr. T. M. DOLAN, Halifax.                             | Dr. EDWIN RAYNER, Stockport.              |
| Brig.-Surg.-Lieut.-Col. E. F. DRAKE-BROCKMAN, London. | Dr. G. E. RENNIE, London.                 |
| Dr. W. A. ELLISTON, Ipswich.                          | Mr. H. B. ROBINSON, London.               |
| Professor DAVID W. FINLAY, Aberdeen.                  | Dr. JOHN ROLSTON, Stoke, Devonport.       |
| Mr. R. S. FOWLER, Bath.                               | Dr. L. W. SEDGWICK, London.               |
| Dr. ALFRED GODSON, Cheadle.                           | Dr. ALFRED SHEEN, Cardiff.                |
| Dr. BRUCE GOFF, Bothwell.                             | Dr. G. E. SHUTTLEWORTH, Richmond.         |
| Dr. C. G. GOODING, London.                            | Dr. E. MARKHAM SKERRITT, Clifton.         |
| Dr. OGILVIE GRANT, Inverness.                         | Dr. R. SOMERVILLE, Galashiels.            |
| Dr. J. GROVES, Carisbrooke, Isle of Wight.            | Mr. HENRY STEAR, Saffron Walden.          |
| Dr. HENRY HANDFORD, Nottingham.                       | Dr. W. J. TYSON, Folkestone.              |
| Mr. JOHN D. HARRIES, Shrewsbury.                      | Dr. A. R. URQUHART, Perth.                |
| Mr. J. HUGHES HEMMING, Kimbolton.                     | Mr. T. JENNER VERRALL, Brighton.          |
| Dr. HOLMAN, London.                                   | Dr. W. L. WINTERBOTHAM, Bridgwater.       |
| Mr. T. VINCENT JACKSON, Wolverhampton.                | Dr. S. WOODCOCK, Old Trafford.            |
| Mr. T. R. JESSOP, Leeds.                              |   |
| Mr. EVAN JONES, Aberdare.                             |   |
| Dr. J. A. LINDSAY, Belfast.                           |   |
| Mr. JORDAN LLOYD, Birmingham.                         |   |

The minutes of the meeting of January 18th and the Special Meeting of March 10th last having been printed and circulated were taken as read and signed as correct.

Read letters of apology for non-attendance from Sir T. Grainger Stewart (President), Dr. Henry Barnes, Dr. Bridgewater, Dr. Brassey Brierley, Mr. Langley Browne, Professor Henry Corby, Mr. George Eastes, Dr. F. Fergus, Dr. P. Sidney Jones, Dr. R. Maclaren, Dr. J. C. McVail, Dr. R. W. Philip, Dr. G. H. Philipson, Dr. Phillips-Conn, Dr. W. Russell, Dr. J. Roberts Thomson, and Mr. Joseph White.